



Senator **Ken Jacobsen**

46th District Legislative Report

Spring 2005

Dear Friends:

This year's legislative session was one for the books. It started with a bang, but when the dust settled at the end of session, leaders in the House and Senate could stand beside Gov. Christine Gregoire and proclaim that we had just finished one of the most productive sessions in recent history.

Facing a budget shortfall of \$1.7 billion, we passed a state budget that invests in public schools, increases access to higher education and maintains the social safety net. We did all of this without a general tax increase and we adjourned on time.

We also passed landmark environmental legislation that will keep our air and water clean. And we passed a transportation budget that makes a down payment on some of the most important projects facing our region, including the Alaskan Way Viaduct and 520 bridge.

This newsletter summarizes these issues and outlines some of the proposals I sponsored this year. As always, I look forward to hearing your comments and concerns.

See you around the neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Sen. Ken Jacobsen

46th Legislative District

Keep In Touch!

Sen. Ken Jacobsen

PO Box 40446
Olympia, WA 98504-0446

Olympia office phone:
(360) 786-7690

Fax (360) 786-7450

Seattle Voice mail
(206) 515-0750

e-mail: jacobsen.ken@leg.wa.gov

<http://www1.leg.wa.gov/senate/jacobsen>

Committees

- Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (Chair)
- Transportation Committee (Vice Chair)
- Agriculture

Contact Me

As always, feel free to contact me with your issues or concerns.

Thank you again for the privilege of representing you in the Washington State Senate.

Support for public schools

I share the concerns many parents expressed over Seattle Public Schools' recent proposal to close several neighborhood schools. Fortunately, the board abandoned this proposal. But it still raised serious questions about the future of our schools.

The proposal was especially disheartening because it came on the heels of a legislative session that

saw tremendous increases in state support for education.

This year, the Legislature dramatically increased per-student funding, fully funded initiatives to reduce class sizes and improve teacher pay, boosted the special education safety net, expanded levy equalization and provided a record \$600 million for school construction.

Early in session, I sponsored a bill that would have allowed local voters to temporarily increase a school district's maximum levy percentage if the school board declares a significant financial emergency. This would help bring funding emergencies to a soft landing as the district works on a long-term solution. The bill did not pass out of the Senate.

Clean air and water

This was one of the best legislative sessions for the environment in recent memory. The Legislature passed several landmark bills that will help ensure that our air and water are clean.

More than 50 percent of the air pollution in our state can be linked to automobile emissions. This pollution can lead to respiratory illnesses, including asthma and cancer. This year, Washington became the ninth state in the nation to adopt the strict "California emission standards." The new standards will improve public health, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and give consumers more options when they purchase new vehicles.

Washington is also the first state in the nation to require all buildings that receive state funding to meet "green building standards." These standards emphasize fresh air, natural light, energy efficiency and the use of locally grown lumber and non-toxic building materials. Local examples of green buildings include

the new Seattle Central Library and McCaw Performance Hall.

Although beautiful, many of our state's waterways are very unhealthy. In Hood Canal, low-oxygen "dead zones" threaten shellfish, salmon and other aquatic life. In



response, the Legislature designated new aquatic rehabilitation zones in the areas of Hood Canal with the most serious environmental or public health concerns. The zones will help focus the work of state and local government and nonprofit organizations working to rehabilitate the areas.

Last winter, we saw how dramatically a relatively small event can affect Puget Sound when a "mystery spill" left a slick of petroleum product floating near Tacoma. To prevent future spills, we created a citizen's oil spill advisory council. The council will help minimize the risk of oil spills, enhance oil spill prevention and ensure a rapid response.

The health of our oceans is also at risk. The federal government is coordinating an effort to review all national and state policies that affect the health of oceans. California, Oregon and Hawaii have established organizations to participate in this review of fishing, shellfish harvesting, offshore drilling and other ocean policy and resource issues.

I sponsored a bill to designate a team from Washington to coordinate with our neighbors and the federal government. The bill passed out of the Senate, and funds for the commission were included in the budget.



Transportation

United we “haul,” divided we stall. That was the theme of the transportation budget we passed this session. The plan includes \$2 billion for the Alaskan Way Viaduct, \$500 million for the 520 bridge and \$992 million for Interstate 405.

The package focuses on public safety, economic development and solving the worst traffic bottlenecks. In this bipartisan, 16-year plan, some projects will be funded from start to finish, just as in the 2003 Nickel Package. Many of the largest and most important public safety projects will be completed in partnership with local or regional entities.

The transportation budget will be financed through a 9.5 cent increase in the gas tax phased in over the next four years, as well as small annual weight fees on passenger vehicles.

Veterans conservation corps benefits wild areas and returning veterans

The restorative powers of wilderness are no secret to those who live in the Northwest, so it only made sense that a state veterans conservation corps would be a way to help returning veterans recover from the stresses of war as they improve the state’s wild areas and watersheds.

This session, I passed a bill that establishes the conservation corps. The corps will provide jobs to returning veterans, help rejuvenate forests and watersheds in Washington and could potentially help veterans recovering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The state Salmon Recovery Funding Board will oversee funding. The bill was signed into law by Gov. Christine Gregoire and goes into effect July 24.

My father was a World War II veteran and he might have had the equivalent of PTSD. I didn’t know what was going on in his head, but I knew that he loved being outdoors. For him, it was something very therapeutic. In the next few years we’ll see many of our soldiers returning home with PTSD. Perhaps working to restore nature will be healing for them.

Sixth-grade dynamo passes his first bill

Alex Jonlin, a sixth-grade student at Wedgwood Elementary School, was the driving force behind a bill that created a legislative youth advisory council. The bill was signed into law by Gov. Christine Gregoire and goes into effect July 24.

The bill created a legislative youth advisory council to examine issues of importance to youth and advise the Legislature on these issues. The council will be expected to meet three to six times per year.

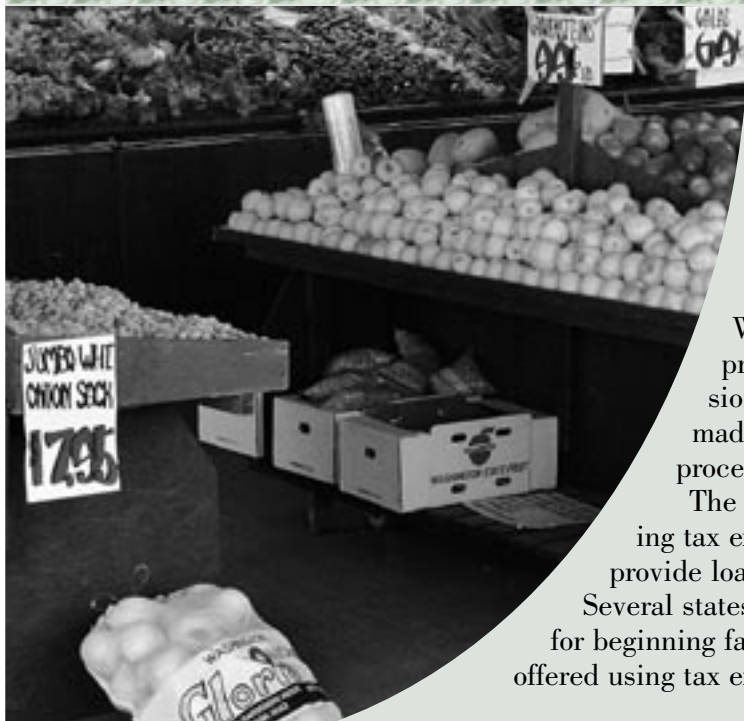
Alex proved to be a real tour de force in the Legislature. He drafted the initial version of the bill, lobbied it, testified on it and moved the bill through the process. I agreed to sponsor the bill after Alex presented me with 320 petition signatures he had gathered in favor of the idea.

Young people like Alex show how important it is that youth have a voice



on the issues that affect their future. It says in the Bible, “The children shall lead.” Alex is proof of that, and proof that we ought to be listening to what they have to say.

A helping hand for first-time farmers



Weather uncertainties, global competition and hours of grueling physical labor make farming one of the toughest occupations there is. Yet many people are looking for an opportunity to earn their living off the land. That's why I sponsored a bill this session that will make it a little easier for urbanite, first-time farmers to get their produce to market.

The first-time farmer program will allow the Washington State Housing Finance Commission to provide financing for beginning farmers. The commission will choose applicants who are likely to repay loans made or acquired by the commission and funded from the proceeds of commission bonds.

The commission provides a range of loan programs utilizing tax exempt bonds. The tax savings allows the lenders to provide loans at a reduced interest rate to qualified borrowers. Several states utilize tax exempt bonds to operate loan programs for beginning farmers. The parameters of the program that may be offered using tax exempt bonds are set by the federal tax code.

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PO Box 40446, Olympia, WA 98504-0446

Sen. Ken Jacobsen



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